

July 2, 2003

Mr. L. Brent Bozell III
Parents Television Council
325 South Patrick Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

Dear Brent:

I am, as you know, tremendously pleased with the work that you, the Parents Television Council and the other organizations that have joined with you are doing in America's battle against indecency on the public airwaves. I used to refer to a "race to the bottom" in describing increasing indecency in our national programming, but I'm not so sure there even is a bottom any more. It just seems to get worse. At the same time, the FCC has earned a grade of "F" for the job it has failed to do in enforcing the statutes that exist to curb indecency. The Commission puts too much of the onus on listeners to prove violations of the law, and when – once in a great while – some infraction is actually found, our fines don't represent even a slap on the hand. And we've never taken a license away from those who repeatedly peddle smut and violence to our children. Indeed, we didn't even send a recent WKRK-FM, case containing some of the worst material I've ever read, to a license revocation hearing! So you can see why I am pleased that you and a broad bipartisan coalition are on the job.

I agree with you that we need to put more Commission resources into the job. But first we need to have a Commission commitment to do the job in the first place. Absent such a leadership commitment, nothing will ever get done. That means having accountable Commissioners, not the staff, make these decisions. I also agree with you that the Commission needs to put behind it, clearly and unequivocally, the requirement that the complaining listener must provide a tape or transcript of an allegedly indecent broadcast. And I further agree that we need to process complaints much more speedily than we do. The "Opie and Anthony" case is still outstanding after nearly a full year, and other complaints that I have been urging our Enforcement Bureau to investigate have been pending even longer.

I applaud your asking the Commission for early commitments. I hope you will keep pushing, and pushing hard, on this. As I traveled across the nation during my media ownership hearings this year, I saw first-hand the palpable and rising anger of the American people over what they and their children are being served up during prime-time viewing hours. I also saw that many viewers believe there is more than a casual – perhaps a causal – relationship between the rising tide of indecency on the airwaves and the rising tide of media consolidation that has taken place. Unfortunately, the majority of the Commission turned a deaf ear to my suggestions that we study this relationship before

we voted on the ownership rules. I don't believe we had any business voting on June 2 without having looked into this question.

Brent, I believe we are at a real crossroads on this issue. Your efforts have been so critically important in making this a visible issue and I think there is a determination all cross America to do something now. That includes enforcing the law with sufficient resources so we don't make a mockery of the law; looking at possibly changing our definition of indecency if the current definition is not getting the job done (and seriously considering incorporating excessive violence into that definition, because such violence is every bit as indecent as excessively graphic sexual depictions); and having Congress pursue this matter to see what it can do to encourage more Commission vigilance on these issues and what more might be done statute-wise. In this regard, I was enormously encouraged at recent Senate Commerce Committee passage of amendments to significantly strengthen our indecency enforcement.

I look forward to continuing to work with you on all this, convinced as I am that the moment is at hand when the people's righteous anger can be turned into a righteous policy against those who so flagrantly misuse their trust as stewards of the public airwaves.

Warm regards,

Michael J. Copps

cc. Christian Coalition
Concerned Women for America
Kids First Coalition
Culture and Family Institute
Morality in Media
Family Research Council
Citizens for Community Values
American Mothers
Salvation Army